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Catholic correspondents will give me, through your paper, a clear and plain answer as to what we are to believe on this important subject. For, without giving in to the Protestant supposition that the end of the world is so very near at hand, as that those now alive may live to see it, still the Day of Judgment must come sometime, and there can be no reasonable objection that we should know now how we may expect to stand then.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

IN EARNEST.

We gladly insert the above letter, and shall be glad if any of our Roman Catholic correspondents will give a clear and plain answer to it. Fifty years in such a place as Purgatory is represented to be, is, indeed, a very terrible idea to those who believe it to be a reality. The question is all the more important—is it a reality or a fiction? We believe it to be a fiction; first, because it is never once mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, where Heaven and Hell are spoken of in places innumerable; secondly, because it is inconsistent with those passages in Scripture, in which the blood of Jesus is stated to *cleanse from all sin*, and which, therefore, renders needless any other mode of purification; thirdly, because no tradition of it is traceable to the times of our Lord and his Apostles; fourthly, because, in the fifth century, St. Patrick, in his works, never once alludes to it, and even negatives its existence in his treatise on "The Three Habitations"—Earth, Heaven, and Hell; fifthly, because Gregory the Great treats it as a *new discovery* in his time—viz., the sixth century; sixthly, because we have clearly traced its origin to Paganism and heresy, and not to the Fathers of the Primitive Church. We earnestly invite our respected correspondent to an investigation of these reasons for believing that Purgatory, though truly terrible to those who believe in it, is not a reality, but a mere delusion, which we are satisfied has done more to render mankind miserable and vicious, than any other popular error which has ever prevailed in the world.

FLOWERS FOR DECEMBER.

ALMOST the very last representative of the glorious flower family is the "golden-anthered, ever-fair CHRYSANTHEMUM." It appears in the middle of November, and continues flowering till the close of December. A favourite flower it would have been in June, but in the midst of winter, smiling as it lifts its cheerful eye to heaven, through storm and rain, it is tenfold welcome—

"Like an old friend's pleasant face,
Though all the earth is void of grace,
And the very birds are dumb,
Cheerful, gay, Chrysanthemum."

So bright is its countenance, and so pleasant its smell, that it seems almost unnatural to the season; and we might fancy some rose tree to have slept the summer months, and awakened now to find all its gay cotemporaries departed.

"But though thy wintry doom may seem severe,
Uncheered by songs of birds or kindred flower,
I do believe thou dost not blossom here
But by the will of that Almighty power
Who makes thy fragile bloom an instrument
To teach the proud and murmuring content."

And most aptly fitted to teach this lesson of content is the flower that shows itself so cheerful and bright, in the midst of gloom and storm. It is the philosopher of its race, and the appropriate emblem of contentment under adversity.

The term Chrysanthemum, or gold-flower, is a generic name, given by botanists to several plants bearing star-shaped flowers. The ox-eyed daisy is the *C. leucanthemum*; the corn marigold is the *C. segetum*—both natives of Ireland. The Chrysanthemum that flowers just now is the Chinese Chrysanthemum (*C. Sinense*). The old-fashioned red kind was introduced into England in 1795; but it is far surpassed in beauty by the varieties more recently cultivated, and brought to such great perfection. Though a native of the warm climates of China and Japan, the Chrysanthemums have become acclimated and hardy among us, and grow as freely in the open air as in the greenhouse.

THE PASSION FLOWER is another of those visitants of the closing year that seem to irradiate the winter day. It is a member of a numerous family of twining plants, chiefly found in a wild state in America, and in parts of central Europe. In the American forests, the Passion Flower climbs the loftiest trees, and clothes them richly in festoons of bright green leaves and gay-coloured flowers. It is there chiefly valued for its fruit, which never ripens with us; though a very interesting object in the early months of spring. The common Passion Flower (*Passiflora carulea*) is a native of Brazil. Everybody has heard how it derives its name from a fancied resemblance between the instruments of our Lord's crucifixion and the several parts of the flower, which were supposed to indicate the accompaniments of our Redeemer's death and sufferings. In the five anthers were supposed to be represented the five wounds of the body; in the triple style, the three nails by which he was fixed to the cross; in the centre pillar, which elevates the germs, the pillar to which he was bound; in the rays of the nectary, the bright halo which encompassed him, or the crown of thorns with which he was crowned; and so on. There is much of poetical fancy and natural sentiment in all this; and did these things end here, we could

have no possible objection to such symbols, but would entertain a lively interest in the innocent emblems of sacred things, which have a place in the reverential recollection and gratitude of every Christian.

No man can pass with indifference the spot where a faithful martyr has perished; nor look unmoved on the fragments of the stake to which his body was bound; and every man of feeling—not to say of pious gratitude—would be disposed to regard with affectionate interest every emblem of our Lord's crucifixion, and especially the cross itself. And our Roman Catholic friends are mistaken if they suppose that any right-minded Protestant regards with aversion or indifference those outward signs which they (the intelligent portion of them) profess merely to reverence and respect, and not to adore or to worship. Why, then, do we not set up the cross and the images of saints and martyrs in our churches and thoroughfares? Are we stoics in religion, and callous to all those recollections and associations connected with Christian history and Christian hope? Far from it; but our reasons are—first, that these reverences, and these settings up of outward signs and symbols, are not commanded or encouraged where we might expect to find them recommended if they were safe and salutary incentives to devotion; but are, on the contrary, expressly forbidden by Him who is wiser than we are, and who understands human nature, its frailties, and its tendency to idol worship, better than we do. And, secondly, because our own experience, and the observation of every honest and intelligent man in the kingdom, tells that these emblems have become the source, not merely of harmless enthusiasm or amiable weakness, but of the most downright and stupid idolatry. We do not wish or mean to impute this to any peculiar perversity of Romanism, but to the natural tendency of our common nature. The natural impulse of the human heart is to make a superstitious use of those sacred emblems and memorials, and thereby to give a misdirection to the religious sentiment, from God and Jesus Christ to canvas, wood, and stone; and it is vain to escape the tremendous responsibility of sanctioning such reverences under metaphysical distinctions of Latria, and Dulia, and Hyperdulia. The Church of Rome itself did not discover these degrees of reverence until the Reformation coerced the Council of Trent, in self-defence, to invent and to promulgate distinctions which—if not without a difference—it is preposterous to imagine that any ignorant peasant can either comprehend or observe. It is a serious question, then, for any conscientious, and enlightened Roman Catholic priest (of whom we are satisfied there are many in Ireland) to consider—Do you, in your heart and conscience, believe it possible to hold up any material object—whether it be a golden calf, or a golden image, or a cross—to a mixed congregation of educated and uneducated worshippers, for adoration—as is done, for instance, in Rome, on every Good Friday—and expect that God's law shall not be broken—"Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath; thou shalt not adore them nor serve them."—Exod. xx. 5.

When the Spaniards who invaded Peru first beheld the Passion Flower growing on every lofty tree, they regarded it as a token that the American Indians should become their converts. History tells us a humiliating tale of their mode of preaching the Gospel of Christ, and how much the most sacred emblems and objects may be desecrated and abused. The Passion Flower has, for reasons too obvious, become the emblem of religious superstition. Would that the cross of Christ was the rallying point of intelligent Christianity, based exclusively on the meritorious sufferings and bloodshedding of Christ, and that men would look more to the substance and reality of that atonement, and be less concerned about the outward emblems of perishable wood and stone.

There is another flower whose pale beauty is displayed amid the desolation and storm of December—the CHRISTMAS ROSE (*Helleborus Niger*)—as beautiful as any that the summer produces. Like flakes of snow or large white roses, its flowers contrast vividly with the dark evergreen of its leaves. It is an Alpine plant, but long since common in our gardens. The *Helleborus Orientalis* was the black *Hellebore* of the ancients, which they believed to possess virtue in the cure of insanity. Anticyra, a city of Greece, was famous for its *Hellebore*, and the proverb, "Naviget Anticyram," was equivalent to send the lunatic to Anticyra. It enjoys a happier association with us, being the emblem of Christian faith.

Christmas, too, is associated with the Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) is a simple, modest plant that cheers the woods at Christmas time. The Druids used it in their sacrificial offerings, and gathered it with superstitious rites, supposing it to possess the virtue of curing certain diseases. The early Christians appear to have borrowed its use from the Druids, as they did the Mayflower on May-day, and employed it as an emblem of joy and gladness at Christmas time. The Holly plant (*Ilex aquifolium*), with its fearless, hardy leaves, bristling like a hedgehog, was, from an early time, used in decorating churches at Christmas, whence it was called Holy Tree, now corrupted into Holly Tree.

The Ivy is, perhaps, the latest flowering plant of the year; and on a warm winter's day the poor bees may be seen hovering round its sickly-green blossoms. Its berries do not ripen till April. The common Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

displays its clusters of green blossoms in almost every part of the world, and is everywhere linked with the warmest associations, whether it climbs the lofty height of the forest oak, or mantles the decaying ruin of departed greatness. Among the ancients the Ivy was associated with the festive board, and revelry and mirth, which seems to us strange and foreign to its natural haunts and habits.

"Oh, how could fancy crown with thee,
In ancient days, the god of wine;
And bid thee at the banquet be
Companion of the vine?
Ivy, thy home is where each sound
Of revelry hath long been o'er,
Where song and story once went round
But now are known no more."

There is indigenous to Ireland a very remarkable variety of the Ivy (the *Hedera helix vegeta*, or Irish or Giant Ivy), prized and cultivated on account of the large size of its foliage and its very rapid growth. The common Ivy attains a great age, and ultimately becomes so thick and strong as to be capable of supporting itself. It is, perhaps, the only climber that is not destructive to the tree that bears it, or that can be reared alongside of a dwelling-house without rendering it damp. How often do we see the trunk of a blighted oak, that had flourished in its pride and glory for ages, at length yielding to the irresistible influence of time, till it sinks into slow decay, and is left leafless and sapless, indebted to its once weak and lowly companion, the Ivy, for its bloom and freshness.

"Round which a luxuriant ivy had grown,
And clothed it with verdure no longer its own."

But have we learned the lesson it is calculated to teach, and to prize the companion that will cling closest and longest to us?

"Then, in thy youth, beseech of Him
Who giveth and upbraideth not,
That his light in thy heart become not dim,
And his love be not forgot.
And thy God in the darkest of days shall be,
Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee."

Reader, we must now bid farewell to the flowers. We have been permitted for an entire twelvemonth to walk the garden of nature, and to cull out some of its choicest ornaments, from the Snowdrop of January to the Chrysanthemum of December. We have seen that every month has its flowers, many of which are able to admonish, to instruct, and to cheer us. Our Blessed Lord called upon the lilies of the field to teach an unbelieving people the lesson of faith; and in much humility, and with a desire not to indulge in mere sentimentality or scientific disquisition, we have ventured to present the flowers of the year, as they succeeded each other, in such associations as they seemed to suggest, and, we trust, without offence to one of our numerous and kind readers.

FARMING OPERATIONS FOR DECEMBER.

(From the *Irish Farmers' Gazette*.)

Wheat may still be sown, but should be got in, if possible, before Christmas. Lea land may be sown as fast as the land can be ploughed up; but in the case of old broken land, if too wet, the sowing must be postponed till it becomes sufficiently dry.

Russian or Winter Beans, Peas, and Winter Vetches may still be sown. For details see former operations.

Lifting and Storing Roots—Advantage of dry weather should be taken henceforth in lifting and storing the several root crops before severe frosts come on. The site chosen for their storing should be cool and dry, and the best aspect is that facing the north; when facing the south or east, early sprouting is encouraged; whereas, if stored at the northern sides of walls, plantations, or hedges, their sprouting is prevented as long as it is possible to do so; when lifted, topped and tailed, the roots are carted off, and built in longitudinal heaps—mangels and turnips about six feet wide at the base, and tapering to a point to the same height. If brush-wood can be conveniently obtained, and laid in in layers, as the roots are being piled up, it will prevent them from tumbling down. Parsnips and carrots should be made up into narrower and lower heaps—say four feet wide and four feet high; they will also be much benefited if packed in sand or moderately dry turf mould. After the roots are packed, the heaps should be thatched, to keep out rain and frost.

Early Potatoes.—In dry weather early sorts of potatoes may still be planted. At this season the lazy-bed system for planting them will be much preferable to the drill. A liberal coat of fresh stable-dung will be requisite, and six inches of cover will preserve the tubers from frost.

Ploughing should be continued in favourable weather, so that all stubble land, and lea for oats, may be completed before the new year.

Draining and Subsoiling should be proceeded with vigorously where needful. After securing a good outfall, begin with the lowest fields, so that each field may fall into its proper places as the works are proceeded with.

Water Meadows.—Obstructions from dead leaves, deposition of silt, &c., should be looked after, and removed from the supply ducts as discovered, so that the water may flow evenly without loss by overflowing. If severe frost comes on, the water must be kept running; but in fine, open weather it should be changed from one quarter to another, as the former becomes saturated, which may be known by a scum rising to the surface, and again returned when the water has sufficiently drained off.